

Lesson 7 - Sin

1. Taking a big picture view. We were made to glorify and enjoy God. Sin keeps us from glorifying and enjoying God. It introduces characteristics and principles contrary to His nature and ours and makes a separation between God and ourselves. This separation manifests itself in alienation from ourselves, from others, and from our environment.
2. Human beings were not created sinful (Eccl. 7:29, cf. Gen. 1:31). God created human beings good but capable of falling from that goodness. WLC 21 Did man continue in that estate wherein God first created him? A. Our first parents being left to the freedom of their own will, through the temptation of Satan, transgressed the commandment of God in eating the forbidden fruit; and thereby fell from the estate of innocency wherein they were created.
3. This sin is passed down to the generations. This is what we call *original sin*. It is the tendency we all have to be opposed to God and our neighbor and exalt ourselves. It is the tendency for human pride. It is, as Reinhold Niebuhr put it, the only empirically verifiable doctrine of our faith.
4. Out of this *original sin* comes all actual sin, i.e., the sins that we commit. WCF 6.4: “From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.”
5. It is important to note that this sin is not just the acts we do but the type of people we are. It’s not just killing someone that’s wrong. It’s all motions in that direction that are wrong (see the Sermon on the Mount, the 10th Commandment, etc.). It’s that which comes from within.
6. How bad is it? “WLC 25 Wherein consisteth the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell? A. The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consisteth in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of that righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually; which is commonly called Original Sin, and from which do proceed all actual transgressions.” In other words, we are all going in the wrong direction because of our sinful disposition (see Eph. 2:1-3, Rom. 8:7).
7. Remember that God warned that Adam and Eve would die if they sinned. This refers to the *misery* that comes about because of our sin. Thus, our Confession calls the state we are born into in this world *an estate of sin and misery*.
8. It is important to remember that all sin is worthy of God’s judgment but not all sin is equally bad. WLC 150 “Are all transgressions of the law of God equally heinous in themselves, and in the sight of God? A. All transgressions of the law of God are not equally heinous, but some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.” See also WLC 151 for a list of those “aggravations.”
9. We should note that the worst sins are generally religious sins because they involve a perversion and defilement of God more directly. It’s easy for “religious” people to define the worst sins as those done by “pagans.” This is especially true

of the tendency to make sexual sins the worst sins while overlooking the pride of religion. In other words, we should be cautious about making the worst sins the sins that *other people commit*. See how Jesus speaks of sin to his contemporaries.

10. In spite of all this, everyone stands condemned before God without any hope of making up for the wrong that they have done. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). This leaves us in a hopeless condition unless God Himself intervenes to change us and justify us.
11. We will talk about how God does this in our next lessons. However, for now, we should note that no one and no situation is ever free from sin. WCF 6.5: “This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself, and all the motions thereof, are truly and properly sin.” Anyone who is looking for a perfect state of affairs is under illusion. At the same time, we should not deny that real progress is possible and that through sanctification God changes people and institutions and in sanctification, “we are made and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness” (WSC 35).